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English troupes in early modern Germany: the women

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600 reales towards the erection of a covered theater in the Corral de la Pacheca in Madrid,⁷³ and he made a similar investment in the Corral de la Principe in 1582. From the very beginning, Zan Ganassa appears to have been a great success in the *corrales*: from June 1579 to February 1580 he played two to three times a week in the Corral de la Pacheco, and in 1581–1582 he acted almost daily in the Teatro de la Cruz. As he had in Italy, he performed in a wide range of venues and genres: in Spain, in addition to *corral* performance, he was active both in court, at wedding ceremonies, and in *autos sacramentales* in Seville during Corpus Christi celebrations. Clearly he was linguistically supple in the manner of Tristano Martinelli. A stylized Bergamask dialect seems to have been his basic stage idiom (in fact he is one of the first *arte zanni* explicitly noted to have spoken Bergamask), but he could modulate it in the direction of standard Tuscan.⁷⁴ According to Bartoli, when Ganassa first arrived in Spain he was not well understood, but was able to mix in Spanish words with his Bergamask dialect.

Because its theater was much more conditioned by regular Italian comedy than has generally been realized, the *commedia dell'arte* was, along with humanist writers and humanist institutions such as academies, the major vehicle by which the theatergrams of Italian drama were conveyed throughout Europe, to all points of the compass and even extending to a circum-Mediterranean reach. Virtual roads forged by cross-dynastic alliances such as those between the Gonzagas and the Habsburgs were quickly traveled, on horseback or muleback, by international actors such as Giovanni Tabarino, Aniello Soldano, Tristano Martinelli, and Zan Ganassa. Actors, such as these, who were particularly flexible both physically (combining acting and acrobatics) and linguistically were the ones who prospered. Exactly what the *commedia* disseminated throughout Europe is difficult to document, because it lacks the clear textual evidence of author-to-author international contact, but it may have been more important for being more diffuse, as Louise George Clubb has argued.⁷⁵ It must have been highly inflected physically, conveyed by actors' bodies before their audiences; it often involved method more than matter, as the evidence of the English "plottes" suggest; it was probably frequently conveyed between actors. If, as this volume argues, something like an international "system" of theater can be identified by a comparative perspective, this essay has attempted to demonstrate that the *commedia dell'arte* could certainly function as an international vehicle.

⁷³ Casiano Pellicer, *Tratado histórico sobre el origen y progreso de la comedia y del histrionismo en España*, ed. José Borque (1804; Barcelona: Ediciones Liberales, 1975), pp. 52–53.

⁷⁴ The *Argute et facete lettere* of M. Cesare Rao, published in 1585 in Venice, feature a "Lamento di Giovanni Ganassa, di lingua bergamasca ridotto nell'italiana toscano." See Marotti and Romei, *La professione del teatro*, pp. 101–2. Also see the article by Maria Grazia Profeti, "Ganassa, Bottarga e Trastullo in Spagna," in Testaverde (ed.), *Zani mercenario*, pp. 178–94.

⁷⁵ Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

Chapter 2

English Troupes in Early Modern Germany: The Women¹

M.A. Katritzky

Before the English theatres officially closed in 1642, women were prohibited from acting in public in Britain. Female as well as male roles were played by all-male casts, of men or boys. Women professional performers were marginalized, as mountebanks' assistants, gypsy fortune-tellers or vagrants.² When the London stages reopened in 1660 after the Restoration, women from the start acted alongside men, taking with great acclaim the female roles traditionally played by boys, and from their very first years on the stage, on occasion also male roles. Thus a German visitor to London describes, in October 1664, a performance of Thomas Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding* "acted by women, some of whom, wearing men's clothes, performed the male roles so well that His Majesty let all the money be given to them alone. The clergy have not approved this comedy".³ This innovation was not entirely unheralded. Already in the 1650s, professional actresses were introduced onto the stages of British troupes acting on the Continent. Troupes of "English comedians" first crossed the Channel to try their luck in Europe in the 1580s. By the start of the Thirty Years War, they had mostly returned to Britain, and by the time peace returned, the European travelling troupes styling themselves "English" were overwhelmingly British, not by virtue of nationality, but only through including actors who had worked with English, or English-trained, actors. Their "music-hall," clown-centred

¹ My thanks to Lois Chaber and the Women's Studies Group 1500–1832 for inviting and commenting on the initial spoken version of this article, delivered at Senate House, London in 2002. Thanks also to fellow members of "Theater Without Borders," most especially Rob Henke, Pam Brown, and Susanne Wofford, for encouraging me to pursue these ideas at the May 2005 Istanbul workshop, and to Eric Nicholson for thoughtful comments on the draft. The present article summarizes, from the perspective of transnational exchange, arguments and sources explored in more detail in the first section of my book *Women, Medicine and Theatre 1500–1750: Literary Mountebanks and Performing Quacks* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). Otherwise unattributed translations are mine.

² On such women, and female performers at court, see, for example, individual contributions to Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, eds, *Women Players in England, 1500–1660, Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); and Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage, Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court (1590–1619)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

³ Jill Bepler, *Ferdinand Albrecht, Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1636–1687). A Traveller and His Travelogue* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), p. 212.

style of performing, based around comic jigs of the type increasingly marginalized on English stages, continued to enjoy popularity in the German-speaking regions until well into the eighteenth century, but received a heavy setback in 1737. This was when the German playwright Gottsched, aided by the great troupe-leader and travelling actress Caroline Neuber, who had herself learned her trade with English-trained actors and actresses, "banished" Harlequin and the English clowns to the margins of the German stage.

Before 1650, British troupes, unlike the Italian and French travelling troupes, did not feature actresses. In pre-1650 Europe, the involvement of women as travelling performers was largely limited to professional Italian and French, but not British, acting and mountebank troupes, amateur Church- and court-sponsored productions, and fairground spectacle. The only women directly involved with British troupes were non-performing spectators and wives. The first "English" actresses arrived only with the post-1650 introduction of actresses onto the stages of the British troupes in Europe. The historical evidence relating to these troupes offers the key to identifying the actresses, and to gaining an understanding of the type of performances they staged themselves and inspired in future generations, and the various categories of non-performing women associated with them.

The "English" players, their theatrical practice, repertoire, and not least their actresses, were central to the founding of a genuinely national German stage. The nationalities dominating the professional touring troupes of early modern Europe for over a century were, from around 1560, the Italians, and then, from the 1580s onwards, the British, and to a lesser extent the French. With few exceptions, it was only after 1650 that Dutch, Flemish and German actors founded full-time professional touring troupes independently of British players. Modern drama is characteristically dominated by the written texts of its play scripts. Early modern professional theatre offered the spectator a much wider range of spectacle than that now associated with the word "theatre." Troupes of travelling players were expected to stage shows which combined acting with music and dancing, as well as clowning, acrobatics and other stage business of a type now largely confined to the circus or sports arena. These non-verbal elements, lacking or inadequately represented in local amateur and Church-sponsored productions, were hugely popular with paying audiences, both in public and at court, and became increasingly crucial to the commercial success of the professionals. Easily the most important non-scripted element was clowning, and the success of individual troupes was often based to a large extent on the popularity of their chief clown, notably the Italian-inspired Harlequin, and the Pickelhering of the English actors. The secular German professional theatre owes its existence to that brought over the Channel by successive waves of British troupes who toured Germany for a century from the 1580s. German actors trained with the British troupes, assimilating their repertoires and stage skills, and continuing to label themselves as "English comedians" and to base their productions on them until well into the eighteenth century, decades after the last British-born actors had left Germany. The more commercially successful aspects of British professional stage business, and notably the clowning, dominated German professional acting, until German players, led by their "English"-trained actresses, campaigned to banish the foreign-inspired clowns from serious drama.

Professional actresses, absent from pre-1650 British troupes, routinely featured in the performances of early modern Italian and French travelling troupes, where the majority of young female roles, and some of the older female roles, were played by women. Donna Lucrezia of Siena, traditionally identified as the first professional actress in Italy, is known through a contract to perform plays which she signed with six male actors in her house in Rome in 1564. Virginia Scott points to professional actresses in French troupes from as early as 1545, when Marie Ferré, wife of a street performer, was contracted, almost certainly with her husband, to join the acting troupe of Antoine de l'Esperonnière.⁴ Despite its vigorous opposition to actresses, the Catholic Church achieved only isolated successes in banning women from Italian acting troupes. Before the end of the century, the *commedia dell'arte* had established the fame of actresses such as Isabella Andreini, Vincenza Armani, and Vittoria Pisimi. French actresses include Marie Vernier and Rachel Trepau, who played with Valeran le Conte's troupe in the 1610s, and Isabel Legendre. Legendre and her husband André du Soleil led a troupe to the Low Countries in 1617, but also performed in their native France, for example at the Foire St-Germain in 1618.⁵ Although the origins of the earliest of these actresses are disputed and varied, by the time women became established on Italian and French stages, most of them were born into, or married into, established acting troupes.

Although French, and especially Italian, actresses excited enormous interest, geographic, linguistic, political, dynastic and religious factors all contributed to the domination of the German speaking regions of north, central and eastern early modern Europe by British troupes. The first woman to receive an official appointment to act on a Dutch stage was Ariana van den Bergh, daughter and wife of the actor-playwrights Adriaen van den Bergh and Gillis Noozeman, in 1655. Before the year was out, she was joined by Susanna Eekhout and Elisabeth Kalbergen. Before 1655, female singers had long featured on the Amsterdam stage, but all female speaking roles were played by boys, and by adult female impersonators.⁶ Bergh, Eekhout and Kalbergen probably accompanied their actor husbands to Stockholm and Nyköping in 1653 as members of a thirteen-strong troupe led by the Dutchman Jan Baptist van Fornenbergh and the English-trained actor Triael Parker, and perhaps already trod the boards with them there.⁷ The pastor Johann Rist saw Fornenbergh's troupe perform several times in Altona before 1666, when he publishes a description of

⁴ Virginia Scott, "La vertu et la volupté. Models for the Actress in Early Modern Italy and France," *Theatre Research International* 23 (1998): 152–8, p. 153.

⁵ Harry R. Hoppe, "New Light on French Actors in Belgium in the Seventeenth Century," *Modern Philology* 62 (1965): 52–60, pp. 55–6; and Rosamond Gilder, *Enter the Actress: The First Women in the Theatre* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1931), p. 91.

⁶ E. F. Kossmann, *Das niederländische Faustspiel des 17. Jahrhunderts (De hellevaart van Dokter Joan Faustus)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1910), pp. 123–4; Kossmann, *Nieuwe bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche tooneel in de 17e en 18e eeuw* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1915), pp. 106–9, p. 121; and George W. Brandt and Wiebe Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theatre, 1600–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 388.

⁷ Gunilla Dahlberg, *Komediantteatern i 1600-talets Stockholm* (Stockholm: Kommitten för Stockholmsforskning, 1992), p. 138.

them, commenting on the skill of both their actors and actresses.⁸ British troupes on the continent had no actresses before the 1650s, and typically used boy actors to play the younger female roles. This precedes the changeover from boy to female actors in Britain itself, where it took place immediately following the Restoration re-opening of the London theatres, in the years 1660–1662.⁹ German professional touring performers did not feature women until the late 1660s, and in Catholic Bavaria, *castrati* were routine well into the seventeenth century, and the first professional German actresses played at court only in 1669.¹⁰

In Germany and the Netherlands, some women acted in amateur productions. Vigil Raber engaged women for a municipally sponsored mystery play he staged with local amateur actors in the Tirol in 1514, while in 1600, the Dutch rhetorician Jakob Duym prescribes two fake breasts for a female character in an amateur play: "unless she is played by a woman." In guild entertainments of 1623 for the visit to Danzig of Polish King Sigismund III, the butchers toss a boy and a girl on a blanket, while the girl throws a doll up even higher than herself, and elsewhere two girls rope-dance.¹¹ In addition to acting troupes, travelling performers of a wide range of nationalities offered spectacle of an acrobatic or otherwise non-literary nature featuring girls and women, either in troupes or as individuals. So, for example, the city archives of Nuremberg record the visit in 1609 of an English showman who, for payment of one kreutzer, allowed spectators to watch a dwarf and a young girl "dance, jump, fence and engage in other comical entertainments together." The girl was evidently still a child, as the city fathers further note that the Englishman "took a lot of money from our people, by touring up and down the countryside on a little wagon drawn by a horse, staging his ridiculous performances with the two little short characters."¹² The Nuremberg archives also record that the rope-dancer Christina Milentz, a self-styled Bohemian exile who drew large crowds in the first half of July 1628, was unable to compete with the English troupe of Robert Reynolds, which arrived in the city on 15 July.¹³

Although the early modern British actors on the continent were exclusively male, several important types of non-performing women were closely associated with them. Three such are the actors' wives and other female dependants, their female spectators, and businesswomen who, independently or in partnership with

⁸ Johann Rist, *Die Aller Edelste Belustigung Kunst und Tugendliebender Gemüther* (1666), *Johann Rist. Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Eberhard Mannack, vol. v (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), pp. 183–411, pp. 280–2.

⁹ See, for example, Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ Karl Trautmann, "Deutsche Schauspieler am bayrischen Hofe," *Jahrbuch für Münchener Geschichte* 3 (1889): 259–430, p. 308.

¹¹ Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theatre*, p. 388; and Johannes Bolte, *Das Danziger Theater im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg and Leipzig: Voss, 1895), p. 53. On Raber's actresses, see M.A. Katritzky, *Women, Medicine and Theatre 1500–1750*, pp. 23–31.

¹² Munich, Stadtarchiv, Slg Trautmann, 91.VII.53.

¹³ Bärbel Rudin, "Hans Mühlgraf & Co, Sitz Nürnberg. Ein deutsches Bühnenunternehmen im Dreißigjährigen Krieg," *Kleine Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte* 29/30 (1978): 15–30, p. 26.

their husbands, provided touring actors with essentials such as loaned costumes, temporary lodgings and playing venues. According to Jane Tylus, the strategy which first made professional actresses possible was the Italian troupes' recognition of domestic doorways and windows as acceptable spaces within which to place women on stage: spaces which in effect punctured the boundary between actors and their audiences. Tylus persuasively argues that "the theatre of windows introduces female spectatorship onto the stage in such a way as to allow the woman to transform traditional passivity into manipulative action."¹⁴

The English players were well aware of the economic importance of appealing to female audiences, although they pursued very different strategies from those of the Italians to win their custom. In order to gain a licence to play in any particular city, travelling troupes had to submit a signed petition to the mayor and councillors. It was customary for itinerant actors to stage a complimentary show performance for them, sometimes rewarded with a donation, before they decided whether to grant a licence, and if so, on the permitted level of entrance fee, and length of playing season. Robert Browne's petitions of 1602 to the city fathers of Frankfurt and Augsburg reveal both that the spectators at such show performances could include not just the dignitaries themselves, but also their wives and children, and Browne's recognition of the central importance of offering seemly and modest presentations.¹⁵

The Nuremberg chronicler Johann Christian Siebenkees's account of the visit of a British troupe to the city in 1612 characteristically emphasises their appeal to women: "they were very diverting to watch, and attracted great crowds of old and young people, both male and female. Also city councillors and educated professionals."¹⁶ One rare piece of evidence concerning the reaction of female spectators to the "English comedians" is a much-published letter of 1608. In this the eighteen-year-old Archduchess Maria Magdalena of Habsburg describes to her older brother the visit to the court at Graz in Austria of John Green's company. While praising their seemliness, she leaves the reader in no doubt as to the enthusiasm of the young ladies of the court for the English actors.¹⁷ Magdalena Behaim, the wife of the Nürnberg silk merchant Balthasar Paumgartner, responds with interest to his enthusiastic description of the performance of Robert Browne's troupe at the Frankfurt Fair in September 1592: "I would most gladly have seen the English troupe and players of whom you write, here."¹⁸ More explicit are a poem by Marx Mangoldt, traditionally associated with the 1597 performance of Thomas Sackville's troupe at the Frankfurt

¹⁴ Jane Tylus, "Women at the Windows: *Commedia dell'arte* and Theatrical Practice in Early Modern Italy," *Theatre Journal* 49 (1997): 323–42, p. 337.

¹⁵ Frankfurt, Stadtarchiv, Ratssupplikationen 1602, fols 265r.–266v. (7 September 1602).

¹⁶ Heinz Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1959), vol. 3, p. 355.

¹⁷ Johannes Meissner, *Die englischen Comoedianten zur Zeit Shakespeares in Oesterreich*, (Vienna: Konegen, 1884), pp. 76–82.

¹⁸ Balthasar Paumgartner and Magdalena Behaim, *Briefwechsel Balthasar Paumgartners des Jüngeren mit seiner Gattin Magdalena, geb. Behaim (1582–1598)*, ed. Georg Steinhausen, (Tübingen: Litterarischer Verein in Stuttgart, 1895), p. 177 (17 September 1592).

Fair, and the comments of threatened locals such as the playwright Bredero and the Augsburg Mastersingers. Mangoldt reserves his most detailed comments for the effect on his female audience of the English troupe's dancer, traditionally identified as Sackville's acrobat John Bradstreet. The Frankfurt poet praises the English actor's cultivated manners, spectacular leaps and skilful dancing, and twice dwells on the tightness of his hose, "deliberately arranged in such a way that one could see that between his legs, upon which lusty wives and maidens were concerned to direct their gaze."¹⁹ Mangoldt describes how the eyes of one well-dressed young woman at a window were so single-mindedly glued to the performing Englishman that she seemed completely in his thrall, and how his attention, in turn, was fixed on the jewellery she wore. He concludes that the dancer's tights, and the crude jokes of Jan and Wursthänsel, the English clowns, are a far greater draw for the audience than any skill in the troupe's music and acting.

Around 1613, the Dutch playwright Bredero admonishes the local Amsterdam women for deserting his plays in favour of those of the visiting Englishmen: "Most virtuous young ladies! We are puzzled as to why some girls have not come to see our play, despite ... every day quite shamelessly, and with great dedication, pursuing the light-footed foreigners, who appear to be permitted every indiscretion."²⁰ The troupe of the Englishman John Spencer was in Augsburg in 1614, a year specifically singled out by the Guild of Mastersingers in a later attempt to ban English actors from the city in order to prevent them from stealing their best young performers, and debauching the local girls.²¹ Fynes Moryson's travel account suggests that it was not just Augsburg girls who reacted in this way:

When some of our cast dispised Stage players came out of England into Germany, and played at Franckford in the tyme of the mart ... the Germans, not vnderstanding a word they sayde, both men and women, flocked wonderfully to see theire gesture and action. ... When some cast players of England came into those partes [the Low Countries], the people not vnderstanding what they sayd, only for theire action followed them with wonderfull Concourse, yea many young virgines fell in loue with some of the players, and followed them from Citty to Citty, till the magistrates were forced to forbid them to play any more.²²

In the 1650s, George Jolly's troupe was also accused of seducing local girls. The Dutch churchman Gysbertus Voetius, writing in 1643, was one of many who warned the women in his flock against going to see the players:

Christians may not watch them. This goes especially for girls and women. The propriety of that sex must not be seduced by such actions, to avoid their falling in the end into too much looseness of speech, immorality, shamelessness, not to mention worse things;

¹⁹ Wilhelm Creizenach, *Die Schauspiele der englischen Komödianten* (Berlin and Stuttgart: Spemann, 1889), p. 326.

²⁰ Nienke Begemann, 'De Engelse komedianten in de Nederlanden', *de Gids, Algemeen cultureel maandblad* 5 (1964): 398–412, p. 410.

²¹ Trautmann, "Deutsche Schauspieler", pp. 291–2.

²² Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS.CCC94, p. 470, pp. 520–1.

— because they dress up and adorn themselves as if vying with one another, and are taken there by men or youths, coming to watch, but also to be watched themselves.²³

Information about women travelling with the troupes is elusive, and often equivocal, as official petitions rarely name more than the troupe leader himself and occasionally other actors. Accompanying family, servants and other dependants are only exceptionally alluded to in official documents, as when a troupe leader cites the need to feed a large entourage to strengthen his request for permission to perform. John Green was one such. A troupe leader who rose through the ranks, starting as a boy actor of female roles, before going on to play the clown and leading a troupe of his own, by 1615 his petitions were citing his need to support a troupe of eighteen.²⁴ The actors John Bradstreet (married to Katharine Brasen, the Danish personal chambermaid to Herzogin Elisabeth of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel), Thomas Sackville and Jacob Peadle were accompanied by their wives during their 1597 Frankfurt season. Sackville, the troupe's leader, successfully petitioned for his wife, Elisabeth Smidts, to be allowed to stay on in Frankfurt as a private lodger, for a month or so, rather than in a public inn, while he was away from Frankfurt. Bradstreet and Peadle were also granted permission for their wives to stay on, with the proviso that they move into a public inn, if their stay exceeds the agreed period.²⁵ Possibly as early as 1602, Sackville, creator of the famous stage clown Jan Bousset, retired from the stage to concentrate on his business interests as a cloth merchant. These were carried on by Elisabeth Francken, his second, German, wife, after his death in 1628, but with so little success that she died in debt and poverty in 1641, followed by Sackville's only surviving child a year later.²⁶

While playing with his troupe at the Polish court for several years from 1616, George Vincent made several brief visits to London, importing goods into Warsaw in 1617 and 1618. In 1618, he also brought back five more performers, as well as Harris Jones, the wife of his fellow actor Richard Jones, and his own wife and children. Harris Jones routinely accompanied her husband on the continent, as confirmed by documents of the period 1615–1616, and a letter of 1620 to Edward Alleyn, noting that she is waiting in Danzig to rejoin her husband, who is at court, and asking for help in paying her London rent. In 1642, shortly after the death in Warsaw of the English actor whose stage name was Pickelhering (almost certainly George Vincent), his widow was living in Warsaw on a pension from King Vladislaus of Poland.²⁷ Pregnancy and childbirth were commonly cited reasons for trying to extend playing

²³ Brandt and Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theatre*, p. 399.

²⁴ Bolte, *Das Danziger Theater*, p. 46.

²⁵ Frankfurt, Stadtarchiv, Ratsprotokolle 1597, fol. 39v., 41r., Burgermeister Bücher 1597, fol. 107r., 110v. (27 and 29 September 1597).

²⁶ Paul Zimmermann, "Englische Komödianten am Hofe zu Wolfenbüttel," *Braunschweigisches Magazin* 8 (1902): 37–45, 53–7, p. 38, p. 40, p. 44, pp. 54–5.

²⁷ Walter W. Greg, ed., *Henslowe Papers, Being Documents Supplementary to Henslowe's Diary* (London: Bullen, 1907), pp. 94–5; J. G. Riewald, "New Light on the English Actors in the Netherlands, c.1590–c.1660," *English Studies* 41 (1960): 65–92, pp. 89–90; and Jerzy Limon, *Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe 1590–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 100–2, p. 105.

seasons in particular cities, as for example in 1657 by the troupe leader George Jolly, who used the heavily pregnant state of his wife as a reason to plead for an extension to the stay of his acting troupe in Frankfurt.

Neither the presence nor the duties of actors' wives are revealed in routine archival documents. That the troupe leader John Spencer was accompanied on tours by his wife and children is indicated in an official document of 1615. This records that Spencer was awarded the citizenship, protection and patronage of the city of Cologne, following the conversion to Catholicism of his entire acting troupe and entourage, including himself, his wife and his children.²⁸ A fluke incident of two years earlier reveals that it was the responsibility of Spencer's wife to collect the entrance money from spectators. It is noted in his petition to the city authorities of Rothenburg in Bavaria, after a particularly sordid episode at the end of 1613.²⁹ Spencer relates that his heavily pregnant wife was stationed on her own at the door of the New Hall of Rothenburg's Town Hall, which led to the Old Hall. She was collecting entrance fees to the performance of her husband's troupe, evidently to be held in the Old Hall, when she was challenged by two soldiers who tried to enter without paying. They forced their way past her, manhandling her to the ground over the chair behind her, and allowing some twenty more customers in the queue to push past without paying, before Spencer's wife, injured and further handicapped by pregnancy, could get up and summon help. Both soldiers pleaded innocent, but were sentenced to choose between heavy fines, or banishment from the region.

Women also contributed to the business of providing costumes and props for the theatre, sometimes in surprisingly enterprising ways. When, in 1592, Richard Jones was asked by the troupe leader Robert Browne to accompany him "beyond the seas," his first thought was to ask perhaps the greatest theatrical entrepreneur of Shakespeare's time, Philip Henslowe, to help him reclaim a suit and cloak he had pawned. Natasha Korda's research into the pawnbroking activities of Henslowe identifies the probable role in Henslowe's interrelated lending, pawnbroking and theatrical costume and prop business interests, of women such as his wife Agnes and niece Mary, and his probable employee Goody Watson.³⁰ Henslowe's clients evidently included travelling players, such as Richard Jones, as well as those working in London.

A document of 1644 in The Hague archives records a payment of 118 guilders by Nathan Speede, to a certain Jane Sijburch Jones of The Hague, widow of the late "Robbert Reijnals." Born in 1599, she was the daughter of the actor-manager Robert Browne, and widow of Robert Reynolds, another successful English touring actor, whom she had married by 1615, and whose last recorded tour was in 1640 with William Rowe.³¹ Jane Reynolds settled in The Hague at the beginning of the 1640s,

²⁸ Meissner, *Die englischen Comoedianten*, pp. 37–8; and Trautmann, "Deutsche Schauspieler," p. 305.

²⁹ Rothenburg Stadtarchiv, AA 536/I, fols 11r.–v., 13r.–17v.

³⁰ Greg, *Henslowe Papers*, p. 33; and Natasha Korda, "Household Property / Stage Property: Henslowe as Pawnbroker," *Theatre Journal* 48 (1996): 185–95.

³¹ Bolte, *Das Danziger Theater*, p. 69; and Willem Schrickx, *Foreign Envoys and Travelling Players in the Age of Shakespeare and Jonson* (Wetteren: Universa, 1986), pp. 221–3.

where she married a local innkeeper, Jacob Stalpert, in 1649.³² The payment to Jane Reynolds from Nathan Speede, like her late husband a touring actor, was for the loan of a set of costumes used by Speede and his troupe in a performance of 1644 at The Hague, before the Princess Royal. Jane Reynolds maintained her links with British players, and economic dependency on the theatrical profession, for many years after the death of her husband. Nathan Speede was perhaps a kinsman of the Samuel Speede who, with his French wife Anne André, tried to establish a troupe of English actors in Paris in 1646. The couple seem to have been actor-managers, leading a full-sized British company, possibly that formerly sponsored by the Prince of Wales, although nothing is known about the involvement of actresses, or any possible acting career of Anne André herself. The couple hired and converted a Parisian tennis court, but were constrained to relinquish most of their costumes to their landlord when they fell into serious arrears, and to play in private houses.³³ It is not known whether Jane Jones and Jacob Stalpert provided lodgings for touring actors. One woman who provided both lodgings and a playing venue was Anna Catharina Hanssen. After the death of her husband, she continued to run Frankfurt's Sanduhr Inn, where the English comedians habitually lodged while playing at the Frankfurt Fair. In 1620, she wrote to the city authorities outlining the financial hardships she faced after they had turned down a petition to play at the Spring Fair from Robert Browne, whose troupe had been lodging with her for three weeks. Hanssen indicates that her late husband had supervised considerable and expensive building alterations to convert the Sanduhr Inn to a suitable venue for theatrical performances for the English players, who had long been accustomed to staying there during their playing seasons at the Frankfurt Fairs, leaving her with considerable debts. Without a playing permit, the English comedians had no means to pay her, and she did not see how, as a poor widow, she could continue to support her small children unless the City Fathers reconsidered their decision. She assured them that, as "the woman of the house," she would not shirk responsibility for ensuring the modesty of their performances, and the honouring of all obligations. The resulting permission to play is also the last record of Robert Browne's activities in Germany.³⁴

The first British troupe leader known to have employed actresses is George Jolly.³⁵ Born in the London borough of Chelsea in the second decade of the seventeenth century, Jolly toured the Low Countries, France and Germany in the late 1640s, with William Rowe, an English actor. Already noted in connection with Jane Reynolds, Rowe seems to have settled his family in Utrecht, and has been identified as the father of Jolly's wife, Maria di Roy of Utrecht. It is not known when Jolly married, or whether his wife acted, but she was certainly touring with him at the end of 1659, when the imminent birth of

³² Riewald, "New Light on the English Actors," p. 84, p. 86.

³³ Alan Howe, "English Actors in Paris during the Civil Wars: Samuel Speede and the Prince of Wales's Company," *The Seventeenth Century* 14 (1999): 130–42, p. 132, p. 136.

³⁴ Frankfurt Stadtarchiv, Ratssupplikationen 1619, fols 324r.–327v. (30 March 1620).

³⁵ On Jolly, see especially Riewald, "New Light on the English Actors"; Robert J. Alexander, "George Jolly [Joris Joliphus], der wandernde Player und Manager: Neues zu seiner Tätigkeit in Deutschland (1648–1660)," *Kleine Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte* 29/30 (1978): 31–48; and John H. Astington, "Two Seventeenth-Century Actors: New Facts," *Theatre Notebook* 55 (2001): 2–5.

their child was given as a reason for extending his stay in Nuremberg. This was shortly before he returned to England, although he made occasional visits to the continent as late as the 1670s, when he was in Dresden with a largely German troupe.³⁶ He led troupes throughout the German-speaking regions in the 1650s, at a time when most other itinerant British troupes had permanently returned to Britain. Jolly's financially disastrous tour of 1651 terminated with the pawning and then loss of most of his troupe's costumes and props. This led to a radical restructuring of the troupe in 1652. In order to strengthen his market appeal in Germany, Jolly kept only a few British players, and replaced his Netherlanders with a much larger contingent of native German-speaking actors. A dated list of 1653 gives the first names of Jolly's actors, including two women. Their names, Ursel and Catrin, indicate non-English origins, and they have been identified as Maria Ursula Cärer and Catharina Fasshauer. That women were not just a temporary addition to the troupe is testified by the mention of actresses in several supplications, such as one to the authorities of Basel. In a playbill of December 9 1654, Jolly, styling himself the "genuine English Pickelhering," offers to delight the citizens of Rothenburg, with "lovely English music and genuine women, after the French fashion."³⁷

In 1655, Jolly joined forces with the most significant early German acting troupe, led by Johann Ernst Hofmann and Peter Schwartz, whose wife Rebecca also acted with Jolly's players. However, he lost his two most talented actresses in or around the year 1657, when friction between Jolly and the Germans led to the troupe splitting up again. Peter and Rebecca Schwarz, and Jolly's protégé Ursula Cärer and Hofmann, now married, set up an independent troupe, although economic constraints persuaded them to join forces with Jolly's troupe for one last time in Frankfurt in 1657.³⁸ The troupe of Hofmann and Schwarz became known as the "Innsbruck comedians" because, by 1660, they were employed by the Innsbruck court, becoming the first longstanding professional German troupe, and the first to be engaged as court players, although they continued to tour. As late as 1669, a playbill for their Rothenburg season still advertises as a novelty the inclusion of "genuine women" on stage.³⁹ Ursula Hofmann, Jolly's pupil, has the distinction of being the first in a long line of accomplished actresses who, with or without their husbands, led German troupes. These women, many of them directly or indirectly trained by

³⁶ J. A. Worp, "Die englischen Komödianten Jellifus und Rowe," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 46 (1911): 128–9, p. 128; Riewald, "New Light on the English Actors," p. 86, pp. 88–91; Harry R. Hoppe, "English Acting Companies at the Court of Brussels in the Seventeenth Century," *Review of English Studies* n.s. 6 (1955): 26–33, p. 31; Limon, *Gentlemen of a Company*, p. 11, p. 101, p. 124; and Astington, "Two Seventeenth-Century Actors," p. 3.

³⁷ Alexander, "George Jolly," p. 36; and Jolly's playbill reproduced by Bärbel Rudin and Hans-Joachim Kurz, "Pickelhering, rechte Frauenzimmer, berühmte Autoren: zur Ankündigungspraxis der Wanderbühne im 17. Jahrhundert," *Kleine Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte* 34/35 (1988): 29–60, p. 36.

³⁸ Bärbel Rudin, "Der Prinzipal Heinrich Wilhelm Benecke und seine 'Wienerische' und 'Hochfürstlich Bayreuthische' Schauspielergesellschaft. Zur Geschichte des deutschen, insbesondere des Nürnberger Theaterwesens im ersten Viertel des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 62 (1975): 179–233, 198 n.99.

³⁹ Trautmann, "Deutsche Schauspieler," p. 295, p. 309; and playbill of 1669 reproduced by Rudin and Kurz, "Pickelhering," p. 42.

British actors, shaped the course of German theatrical history for over a century from 1660, co-founding and leading the significant dynasties that characteristically peopled Germany's early acting troupes.

Perhaps the most detailed, keenly observed and vivid surviving insight into the typical performances of the mixed-gender British troupes appears in a literary description occupying three chapters at the heart of a novel, pseudonymously published in 1683 by the professional court musician Johann Beer.⁴⁰ The first describes the publicity methods of Theophilactus de Anglia's fictional English troupe, and provides the exact wording, and even layout, of their handbill. The central episode brings into high relief the extreme sexual licence of the typical playhouse and its spectators, with illicit lovers' assignations flourishing in the dark and noise, and involving women of every age and class. They include elegant ladies, respectable wives, students' girlfriends and prostitutes, as well as the female cut-purses and thieves who preyed on the borrowed finery of the women. The final chapter outlines the chaotic progress of the play itself, to its pitiful premature conclusion, providing the exact wording of the fictional dialogue of the actress and two actors. The plot concerns the Turkish emperor's attempted seduction of a recently widowed young maidservant. Each of their short speeches is punctuated with an extemporized addition by the clown, whose utterances are characterized by word play that is as breathtaking in its vulgarity as in its virtuosity. The contrast between his colloquial dialect and the pompous "high German" of the two main characters further heightens the comical effect of the original. The clown cannot bear to see his wife, the actress, wooed on stage by his colleague the actor. His jocular comments become increasingly pointed and aggressive, and finally, when the clown taps him with his slapstick, the actor can take no more, and punches him on the nose. This initiates a fight between the two men, with the newly hired clown taking his wife and leaving the troupe to muddle their way through the rest of the performance without them.

Although subjective, and biased by strong satirical overtones, Beer's account conjures up the German stage in the period which saw the final throes of the struggle between the waning fashion for the "English" players, and the new taste for the French style of acting. It illuminates the contrast between the male-dominated English style, and the growing confidence of the new English-trained, but French-inspired German female stars, and graphically portrays the struggle for centre stage between the clowns and actresses. Beer's account has particular resonances for Jolly's own troupe, in which struggles of this type had repeatedly been played out quite literally. The renowned English troupe-leader was noted for an exceptionally belligerent temperament, and his actresses evidently found him impossible to work with on any kind of long-term basis. In a letter of 1658, Duke Ludwig of the Pfalz had written of his troupe: "Master George the comedian has arrived in our regions, but in a miserable state, because his company has broken up completely, and split into two, even the women have left him ... George's choleric disposition has again split up the

⁴⁰ [Johann Beer], Florianum de Francomonte, *Die Andere Ausfertigung Neu-Gefangener Politischer Maul-Affen* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1683), in Johann Beer, *Sämtliche Werke*, eds Ferdinand van Ingen and Hans-Gert Roloff (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), vol. ix, pp. 73–82. On Beer and his description, see Katritzky, *Women, Medicine and Theatre, 1500–1750*, pp. 284–98.

company, and he only has 8 companions with him.”⁴¹ In 1660, the political situation allowed Jolly to return to London, where he was granted a Royal Licence to Act, to the dismay of Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant, who bought him out, after which Jolly toured the provinces. The extent to which Jolly himself influenced the acceptance of actresses on Restoration London stages is not known.

⁴¹ Alexander, “George Jolly”, p. 31.

PART II

Transportable Units

Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater

Edited by

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ASHGATE

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